NavneetPriyaji Symbolizes Change

NavneetPriyaji is fondly addressed as Lalaan by the Vaishnavs who follow Pushti Marg. The history behind the idol of NavneetPriyaji is interesting. It all started when Vallabhacharya was living in his ashram in Gokul. A few sevaks used to offer seva to the small swaroop that was enshrined in Vallabhacharya's ashram regularly.

One day, one of the sevikas, a Kshatriya's wife, went to the banks of Yamunaji, as usual, to fetch water for her daily chores. She was pleasantly surprised when she found not one but four similar swaroops at the bottom of her pot. She took these swaroops to Vallabhacharya and narrated the entire experience to him.

Vallabhacharya knew that these divine swaroops of NavneetPriyaji would bring people closer to Krishna. He gave one swaroop to each of his four sevaks and instructed them to offer seva to NavneetPriyaji with utmost Bhakti. They readily agreed to do so.

One of Vallabhacharya's sevaks, Gajanan Dhaavan lived in Agra at that time. Gajanan Dhaavan offered his seva to NavneetPriyaji till he was able to. But he handed over NavneetPriyaji's swaroop to Vallabhacharya when he became old. Vallabhacharya was living in Adel at that time. He instructed his wife Mahalakshmi to continue with the seva. She passed on the seva to her son Gusainji.

NavneetPriyaji’s swaroop was then shifted to Mathura and Gokul for a few years. NavneetPriyaji’s swaroop is currently enshrined in a separate Haveli beside Shrinathji’s Haveli in Nathdwara.

NavneetPriyaji: Swaroop

Like most other swaroops in Pushti Marg, the swaroop of NavneetPriyaji is small and represents Krishna as a six-month-old child. Unlike other swaroops, NavneetPriyaji has a fair complexion. He holds a ball of butter aloft in his right palm. His left palm rests on the floor. His right leg is bent at the knee. It looks as if he is about to get up and move ahead. His left leg is folded at the knee and rests completely on the ground. His swaroop is devoid of clothes. But he wears anklets, bracelets and a waistband (kandoro) around his ankles, wrists and waist. His hair is coiled above his head in a loose top knot. His eyes are wide open, lined with kohl and look downwards. Two small teeth are visible in his mouth.

NavneetPriyaji’s Leela

The Ringan Leela is described in the 8^{th} adhyaya of the 10^{th} Skanda of Srimad Bhagavad Puran. In this Leela, NavneetPriyaji crawls around Nanda’s house on all fours with a ball of butter in his hands. He spots a mirror in one of the rooms and grins at the child looking at him from the mirror.

NavneetPriyaji wants to share the butter with the child in the mirror. But ends up smearing the butter on the mirror. He does

not understand why the child in the mirror is unable to eat the butter he offers him. So he starts crying loudly.

But after a few moments, NavneetPriyaji is distracted by the calves that are playing in their Goshala. He tries to catch their tails. He forgets about the butter and the child in the mirror and starts playing with the calves.

Krishna offers his butter of wisdom to everyone. But what do we see? Butter or wisdom?

NavneetPriyaji: Swaroop Significance

NavneetPriyaji/Krishna wants nothing. From anyone. He is complete on this own. He has nothing to hide. He has nothing to show. So he wears nothing. Yet Radha and Yamuna can bind him with their unconditional love and Bhakti. Is that why he wears feminine jewellery like bracelets, anklets and a kandoro? To tell us that we can come closer to him if our hearts are full of unconditional love and bhakti for him?

As a mere child, He too cannot make sense of what is happening around him in the real world. Is that why is hair is coiled above his head in a top knot? To tell us that all we can do is to have complete control over ourselves at all times for He alone has total control over the entire cosmos?

NavneetPriyaji’s stance signifies poise. The right side of our body represents spirituality while the left side represents materialism. NavneetPriyaji’s left leg rests completely on the ground and his right leg is poised to move ahead. Can we ignore the reality and sustain ourselves on spirituality alone?

We have to live through the karma that we have accrued from our actions. But we should consciously try to rise above it all and delve within our soul to find the Krishna residing within us. And in others too. Is that why NavneetPriyaji's eyes are lined with kohl? To tell us to introspect every day?

Navneetpriyaji's Ball Of Butter Symbolises Change

Butter is soft, smooth, white and creamy but tasteless. It turns rancid quickly. What does the ball of butter in NavneetPriyaji's right hand signify?

Butter is got with a lot of effort. Cows have to milked. The milk is boiled, made into curd, the cream skimmed off, stored and then churned to get butter. It is a time-consuming process but the butter that floats on top is yummy.

Ah! But butter turns rancid quickly. What was delicious yesterday is unfit for consumption today. The insights that we gleaned from our experiences yesterday will not work today or in the future. We have to keep adapting, keep giving in and giving up, keep learning tough bittersweet lessons till our dying day. For only when we are churned by the joys and sorrows of samsara repeatedly can we taste the butter of bliss, 'Ananda' and find Krishna.

Difference between BalKrishnalalji's and NavneetPriyaji's Swaroop

The swaroop of BalKrishnalalji and NavneetPriyaji is similar. BalKrishnalalji holds a laddoo in both his hands while NavneetPriyaji holds a ball of butter in his right hand alone.

Laddoos are made with several ingredients. Melted sugar is used to bind the cooked ingredients. Laddoos have a long shelf life. BalKrishnalalji holds the laddoo of the material world firmly under his left hand and offers the laddoo of spiritual wisdom to all of us.

From this swaroop we learn to sweeten our materialistic experiences and evolve into better more humane human beings. We can then offer the wisdom of our experiences to others with the hope that they will learn something worth their while from them. It is akin to passing on our values to our children.

NavneetPriyaji's swaroop, on the other hand, symbolizes constant change. Our lives keep changing. So our perceptions about Krishna too keep changing. One particular Leela of Krishna may entice us today, another may seem extremely relevant in our lives tomorrow and yet another Leela may give us the moral strength to simply cope with all the challenges that we are facing right now.

Yes, it's easy to find the Krishna we want and are looking for from his infinite Leelas with our Bhakti, unconditional love, rituals, prayers, silence or reading/listening to the scriptures etc.

But is that enough? Does Krishna reside only within us? Do we consciously bring about a change in our souls and try to see the Krishna residing within the other too? In their fury, pride, jealousy, insecurity, hurt, hatred and pain?

That’s tough. No? Yet those are the inner journeys that we need to go on every day. We should touch base with the Krishna residing within us for sure. But we should also acknowledge, respect and revere the Krishna residing in the other. That is the essence of NavneetPriyaji’s swaroop.